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Sudan: Arab Cause Hurt

By STANLEY MEISLER

NAIROBI (LAT) — The Arab terrorist execution of two American diplomats in Khartoum appears certain to drive President Jafaar El Numairi of the Sudan and his people away from the Arab cause—a cause that has sometimes attracted them and at other times repelled them in the past.

The assassinations are sure to enrage Numairi, his government and many northern Sudanese, most of whom have been caught for years in a conflict of cultural identity between the Arab and African worlds.

Although the Black September guerrilla group has insisted it has no quarrel with the Sudan, the choice of Khartoum to stage the murders was no coincidence.

In Arab eyes, Numairi has strayed far from Arab orthodoxy in the last year. The fact that Sudan even had an American ambassador to capture and to kill is one proof of this, in the view of Arab militants.

Before Numairi came to power in 1969, he was an aggressively militant, anti-Zionist Arab nationalist. But his ardor has cooled since then, and now the terrorist violence in Khartoum probably will extinguish it entirely.

As if to magnify the insult to Numairi, the Palestinian commandos executed the diplomats on the eve of national celebrations of the first anniversary of the treaty ending the civil war that ravaged the southern Sudan for 17 years.

The war was all about the cultural and identity conflict of the Sudanese. The southerners—Black Africans and either pagan or Christian—were rebelling against the northern Sudanese, whom they considered too Muslim and too Arab.

There has been growing Arab impatience with the policies of Numairi in the last year.

In July, Numairi resumed diplomatic relations with the U. S. They had been broken off by the Sudanese in 1967, following the lead of the Arab countries, to protest alleged American support of Israel in the six-day war.

The reopening of relations conflicted with Orthodox Arab foreign policy. It provoked anger in the press of other Arab countries, and prominent Arabists resigned from Numairi's government.

In September, Arabs became even more incensed at Numairi when he refused to allow Libyan transport planes with troops to cross Sudanese airspace on their way to Uganda to help Gen. Odi Amin fight off an invasion of exiles from Tanzania.

At that time, Col. Muammar El Kadafi, the ruler of Libya, accused Numairi of being under the influence of CIA agents in his Cabinet.

Since then, Sudan and the Arab countries, especially Egypt, have exchanged barbs and insults continually. And Numairi has made it clear, in a dramatic change of policy, that he will not bring the Sudan into the federation of Arab republics with Egypt, Libya and Syria.

Around the World

Libya Arrests 11 In Overthrow Plot

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The Libyan government said Friday night that it had crushed a plot masterminded by a nephew of ousted King Idris, according to a dispatch from Egypt's Middle East News Agency.

The dispatch from Tripoli, Libya's capital, said that confessions of 11 men arrested there—including two former prime ministers—described a 5,000-man force massed in the neighboring African republic of Chad for an invasion aimed at overthrowing the revolutionary government of Col. Muhamed al-Qadhafi.

Qadhafi ousted pro-Western King Idris in September, and installed a pro-Egyptian regime.

Radio Tripoli reported that the 11 men would be sentenced to death. It quoted him as saying "All 11 arrested plotters will soon be brought to trial and we shall have no mercy on the traitors."

The Egyptian news agency said that the plot was financed and armed by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency.